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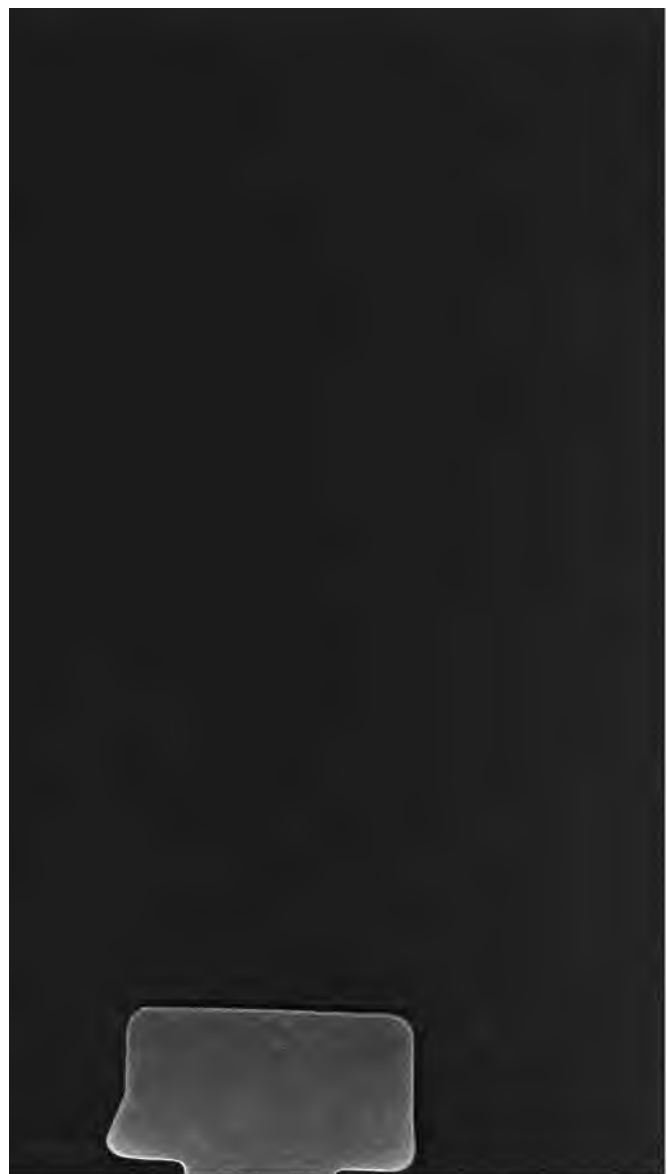
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JESSIE'S

TROUBLES

AND WHAT BECAME OF THEM



1489. f. 1618





"WELL, JESSIE, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?"—Page 4.

JESSIE'S PROVERBS.

THE AUTHOR OF "CHILDREN'S PROVERBS,"
"THE PROVERBS OF THE BIBLE," &c.



London:
SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION, 26 OLD BAILEY E.
—
1877.



JESSIE'S TROUBLES.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "UNDER SUSPICION," "CROWN COURT,"

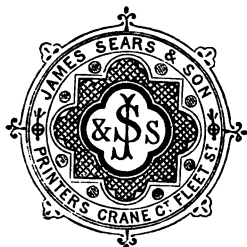
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London :

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1877.



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JESSIE'S TROUBLES.

CHAPTER I.



H JESSIE, Jessie, what will become of us now, what can we do now grandmother's gone?" sobbed two children as they clung round their elder sister, a girl of perhaps fourteen years old, whose face was as troubled and tearful as their own. Well might the children fear, for they were quite alone in the world now their grandmother was dead; that day they had seen her buried in Elton churchyard, and though they knew they must leave the cottage which had been their home so long, they knew not where to go, or how

they were to live. It had always been a hard struggle to get on, for their grandmother had only been able to earn a trifle by shoe binding for a shop in the next town; and this, with what the parish had allowed them, added to two shillings a week which Jessie earned at a little place she worked at, was all they had to support them. Still they had managed to live, for fortunately rent was low in that part, and they had a nice bit of garden in which they had grown vegetables enough to half keep them.

But now everything was changed, the grandmother had died suddenly in her bed one night and only Jessie was left to take care of Charlie and Lucy, who were several years younger than herself, and who still needed so much looking after.

Well might poor Jessie tremble and cry, as her little brother and sister clung to her that night after their grandmother's burial, for she felt lonely and sad. They had been brought up by this good old woman, their father's mother, ever since Lucy was a baby seven years before, and Jessie was old enough to remember their mother who died just then, and their father, who was :

sailor, and who used to come home after his voyages, bringing them presents of birds and shells, and other things from foreign countries where his ship went to. But at last he did not come any more, and one day a letter reached the old grandmother telling her of his death—that he had been washed overboard during a storm. It had been a great sorrow to the poor woman, though the children had seen too little of their father to feel it very deeply, and since then the money he had paid for their maintenance had all come to an end, so things began to get harder; still they had struggled on during that time, and had been very happy, though so poor.

Sometimes the grandmother had felt troubled as to what would become of these children if she was taken from them, but she had tried to trust it all to God, and to bring them up to love Him, and look to Him as their Father, and from their earliest infancy they had learnt lessons of His goodness and mercy which she knew would help them in the future if life was hard and difficult.

So now in their sudden loneliness, although her heart was full of fear, Jessie kept saying to Charlie and Lucy what she was striving hard to be quite

sure of herself, "God will always take care of us, we must pray to Him to show us what to do."

"Well, Jessie, what are you going to do now?" said a neighbour, who came in that evening as the children drew closely together by their tiny bit of fire, talking in low whispers of the future. "You'll have to get these two children off your hands and then do the best you can for yourself."

But Jessie did not like that idea. "I'd work night and day, so as we could all keep together, Mrs. Thompson," she answered. "We've never been parted yet."

"But you can't live on two shillings a week, girl; that's what Mrs. Roberts gives you, isn't it? And who's to see to things and take care of the children. Depend on it, they'll have to go into the workhouse."

Poor little Lucy burst into a storm of crying at that. "Oh Jessie, Jessie, take care of me; oh don't let them take me away," she cried clinging to her sister's frock and holding it tightly, as if some one was going to force her into the workhouse that moment; while Charlie drew closer and looked at Mrs. Thompson with a defiant air.

"Bless me ! I never saw such a child. One'd suppose she thought things would go on the same now her grandmother's gone," said she.

"If you please, Mrs. Thompson, I think perhaps we'll be able to manage somehow. I wish you wouldn't say such things before Lucy, she's little and afraid, besides she misses grandmother sadly," replied the elder girl.

"Oh, very well," said the woman, with an offended air ; "its your own look-out, not mine. I thought I'd step in and have a bit of talk with you as you're all alone, but I'm not one to stay where I'm not wanted," and she walked off banging the door behind her, before Jessie had time to answer a word.

Then Charlie set his lips and clenched his hands in anger. "How dare she come here and make Lucy cry," he began, but before he could say any more another visitor appeared at the door, asking in a pleasant voice if she might come in.

Jessie knew in a moment who it was, and got up to welcome her gladly, for it was Mrs. Holmes, whom everyone in Elton loved, from the richest to the poorest, who had now come to say a kind word to the lonely orphan children.

"Why, what is amiss?" she asked, sitting down and looking round. "Lucy sobbing, and Charlie red and angry, and Jessie quite pale and frightened. My dear children, it is very, very hard for you, but you must try and remember grandmother's gone home—to a bright beautiful home in heaven, where she will never have any more pain Lucy, and where she and your father and mother are all, I trust, happy together. You must not sob and grieve like this, my dear; *God* will never leave you."

"Please ma'am, it wasn't exactly because of that," explained Jessie. "It's because Mrs. Thompson's been in talking of how Charlie and Lucy 'd have to go to the workhouse. You don't think they will, do you, Mrs. Holmes? I feel as if I never could bear that," said Jessie, earnestly.

"I hope not, I trust we can think of some other plan," answered the kind lady, who felt so truly sorry for these desolate children. "I have come down to talk to you, and see what can be done. Come, cheer up, little Lucy, I shall pay the rent of the cottage for another week or two until you have some home, so don't cry any more. Mrs. Thompson didn't mean any harm."

"I hate her," said Charlie, under his breath, but Mrs. Holmes heard him, and turned round.

"That is wrong, Charlie. She didn't hurt you by saying that; and even if she had, you know you should bear it. What would grandmother have said?"

Charlie hung his head. "She made Lucy cry," he murmured.

"Yes; and I know you are very fond of Lucy, and it is quite right to take her part, if it is necessary, but you needn't fly in a passion; besides, as I said before, I don't believe Mrs. Thompson meant any unkindness."

Then Mrs. Holmes glanced round the room which had lost the old neat orderly look it had always worn.

"You've been all busy, and put out of the usual way during this week, I know," she said; "but, Jessie, you must keep things tidy just as if your grandmother was watching. Suppose now you were to sweep up the hearth tidily, and put on the kettle, and give the children their tea?"

Jessie blushed a little, her grief and anxiety had made her forget the daily work, but she rose at

once and did what she was told, and Mrs. Holmes, opening a small bag on her arm, took from it a little piece of butter and a basin of dripping. "I thought you might not have any in the house," she said, putting it on the table, and then produced a little packet of tea and some sugar.

"Now, Jessie, have you enough bread?" she asked; and Jessie said yes, they had sufficient for tea and breakfast next morning; but when Mrs. Holmes saw the small piece which was brought out from the cupboard by the fireplace, she sent Charlie at once to the baker's for a loaf, and bade him bring in a pennyworth of milk too, "for," she said, "you want a comfortable meal to-night to make you strong and able to work by-and-bye."

When this kind friend had seen the children seated at tea, already looking better and brighter, she went home after giving some more directions to Jessie.

"Get the children comfortably to bed, my dear, and then go yourself—you will be better after a good night's rest; and then be up bright and early, and get all into order, just as if your grandmother was here. And be sure you all pray to God to

JESSIE'S TROUBLES.

take care of you and show you what is best to do, and to-morrow I will come and see you again and talk about the future ;” and so Mrs. Holmes went home thinking very much of the three children, and asking God to help her to be a real friend to to them in their great need.

“ Oh, isn’t she a dear lady,” cried little Lucy, almost before the door had closed. “ She isn’t proud a bit, although she is rich and lives in that big house ; she speaks so kind—much kinder than Mrs. Thompson.”

“ She is so good,” said Jessie. “ I suppose it is because she loves God so much, that she loves anyone who is poor, for His sake. How thankful we ought to be she is our friend ; oh ! I’m sure we’ll get on somehow if we pray for help. Grand-mother always said God wouldn’t let anything harm us.”

“ It’s precious hard to believe it always,” put in Charlie, “ but I mean to try.” And they did try to put aside all their fear that night, as they knelt together and offered to their heavenly Father the simple prayer they had learnt as almost infants, and the two younger children soon fell asleep,

although their last waking thought brought tears upon their cheeks, because they missed the old grandmother's good-night kiss and blessing.

But hour after hour was struck out by Elton church clock before Jessie closed her eyes. She was thinking of so many things long past, as well as of the years to come, years in which everything seemed dark and hard, and yet which she knew God would guide and help her through if she only trusted Him.

"I remember sometimes, how when things were bad, and we didn't know how we'd meet the rent, or get our winter coals, what grandmother would say," thought Jessie to herself; "I know manys the time I've seen her look anxious and worried, and then all of a sudden her face would clear up, and she'd smile and say, 'We've got bread for to-morrow, and God will shew us what to do next. We must trust Him, and go 'step by step.'"

So Jessie, feeling that their Heavenly Father had provided for the wants of the coming day, and had found them a friend, resolved to try and go "step by step," clinging to Him, and not let fear for coming years press her down, and then at last

she slept. Next morning she was up betimes, and with Charlie's help the kitchen was in good order, and breakfast over and cleared away, long before Mrs. Holmes appeared ; indeed it was nearly eleven o'clock, after all, when Lucy, who had posted herself at the window since early morning, called out that she was coming in sight of the cottage.

" Well, this looks better," said the lady, glancing round the kitchen with a smile. " You have been good, industrious children, I can see. What did Charlie do ? "

" I did the grate, and lit the fire, and filled the kettle, and cleaned the knives and the windows too," said Charlie.

" That's right ; and Lucy ? "

" Lucy dusted the chairs, and put the things in order on the shelves," said Jessie, looking quite proud of her little sister.

" And Jessie did all the rest," put in Lucy herself, who had been hiding behind Charlie, looking very shy.

" All very nice and right," said Mrs. Holmes. " You see how well things get done when everyone helps a little. Now, I have been thinking a

great deal about you all ; and really, Jessie, I feel quite sure the easiest plan would be to get Charlie and Lucy into some good schools, and you might manage to get some light place and learn to be a servant."

Jessie burst into tears, and Lucy joined, while Charlie looked very much inclined to do the same, if he had not thought it would be babyish in a boy of nine years and a half old, and now he had such a great desire to be manly !

" Oh, please ma'am, I can't bear to part with them," said Jessie. " I don't care *what* I do, I'd work day and night, if only we can keep together. We only want one room, and we can live on so very, very little."

Mrs. Holmes felt very sorry for the poor girl, and yet she could not see how it was at all possible for them to live like that. " I wish you could have your wish, Jessie," she said kindly ; " I know you would work hard ; but, my dear child, just think how little you can do. You get two shillings a week and your food now from Mrs. Robins, who, I suppose, will take you back if you can be spared ; but that will go a very little way ;

it might just pay rent, but then what is to keep you all? ”

“ I thought Charlie might get a place, too,” said Jessie, humbly.

“ Yes, I have thought of all that, perhaps he might Jessie; but then the wages he would get would be very small, because he is so young; and then he would be losing all he has learnt at school, instead of getting on with his reading and writing, so as to do well by-and-bye. And then who is to see after Lucy? She cannot be left to take care of herself all day long. No, no, Jessie, you must try and make up your mind to do what is best for you all, even if it seems hard. I feel sure your grandmother would have seen things as I do.”

But the children could not be persuaded to like Mrs. Holmes' plan. At last she rose to go. “ Now don't fret about this,” she said, “ I shall see that you have all you want for a little while, until something is settled, and you are ready to leave here; meantime you must try and get used to the thought that, just for a little, you must be parted until you are old enough to work, and then you will make a home together again.”

After this friend had gone, and, indeed, for all the rest of the day, the three children talked of nothing else but the terrible trouble it would be to be separated ; until at last, Charlie and Lucy's distress worked so upon Jessie's heart, that she promised to take them quite away from Elton, without telling anyone, saying, they would do the best they could somewhere else.

"If only we could get to London," said Charlie. "Oh, Jessie, don't you think you could find the way?"

But Jessie shook her head. "I know we'd have to go through Hurst, and along the road to Wynham, Charlie," she said, "but I suppose if we asked, some one would tell us how to get on. I don't know how we'd do for money and food on the road though."

"Couldn't we take all the bread we had in the house, sister?" said Lucy. "Yes, dear, but what would we do when it was gone? Oh! dear, I'm afraid Mrs. Holmes would be very grieved, and she's been so kind, too; still, I can't help it, I couldn't live away from you;" and then the three children drew closer and cried again.

However, as several days passed on, Jessie's reluctance to go away became less, as she feared to hear every time Mrs. Holmes came, that some plan was made for sending Charlie and Lucy to school ; her own anxiety to keep them, and their tears and entreaties to her to take care of them, made her resolve to leave Elton without any further delay.

So, one day after Mrs. Holmes had been to pay them one of her frequent visits, the three children packed up some clothes into small bundles, and taking all the food there was in the house, prepared to start ; but first of all Jessie had written a note to their kind friend, which she left on the table of the kitchen. This is what it said :

"DEAR MADAM,

"I hope you will not think me ungrateful, but I couldn't part with Charlie and Lucy ; so if you please, dear Madam, we have all gone away, and we shall try to get some work in London. Thank you, dear Madam, for all your kindness. From

"Your humble servant,

"JESSIE."

It had taken her a long while to compose this letter, for although she had learnt to write at the

school, and could spell correctly, she did not know very well what was best to say in a letter ; however, when she read it out to her brother and sister, they said it was “beautiful” ; so the envelope was closed with a bit of red sealing-wax, which had lain in the old grandmother’s work-box for many a year, and sealed with the end of Jessie’s thimble, and that done, there was nothing else to wait for : so, with a rapid glance round the kitchen, which made their eyes fill with tears, the children closed the door softly behind them and went out.

It was late in the afternoon, and the village with its cottages was nearly hidden in the grey shadows of the March evening, when the children left Elton for the neighbouring town of Hurst. No one appeared to notice them or ask where they were going, though they met several neighbours who gave them a cheerful “Good-day” as they passed on, but Lucy’s strength soon flagged, and she was tired of carrying her bundle very quickly, and Jessie was wondering what they should do, when, fortunately, a market woman, who was passing in her cart, overtook them as they toiled up a steep hill, and although a stranger, she



**"THE CHILDREN CLOSED THE DOOR SOFTLY BEHIND THEM, AND
WENT OUT."—Page 16.**

felt so kindly to them that she offered the three a lift in the cart as far as her home, which was some miles the other side of Hurst, and as they drove on, and she heard of the long journey they had in view, she insisted upon giving them supper, and a bed.

Nothing could have happened more fortunately for the children's plan, as besides the help it gave them, this made sure of their flight not being discovered until they were a good way from their old home, and would not easily be found ; so their spirits revived, and in their foolish self-confidence they imagined everything would go well with them during their journey, and any regret they had previously felt was at an end.

Their new friend was quite interested in them, especially when she found they had neither father or mother, or any relation in the world.

"And what will you do in London?" she asked. "It's a bad place for three little things like you." But Jessie replied, that though she was only so young, she had been used to work, and she was sure she could take care of Charlie and Lucy.

"Poor children," said the kind soul, "I'm

afraid you'll be lonesome in a strange, big place like that, with never anyone to say a friendly word to you." However, she made them up a basket of as much food as they could carry, and started them fairly on their way in the early morning, first putting two half-crowns in Jessie's hand.

"You'll want it bad enough in London," she said, and then noticing the child's hesitation, she added, "Nay, child, you needn't mind taking it. For all we're only working people, we're not in want of anything, thank God, and there's only my master and me with never a chick or child to look to us. Besides, we've got a few pounds put by for a rainy day, so it would be hard if we couldn't spare a trifle for them that's all alone in the world."

To Jessie that five shillings seemed a small fortune, and with the one and eightpence she had in the house and had brought with her, she fancied they could want for nothing before they reached London. "I think we shall get on beautifully, Charlie," she said, as they walked briskly on with light hearts and bright faces. Yet underneath their smiles, each one of the children had a secret

consciousness that they were not acting rightly to good, kind Mrs. Holmes, who no doubt by that time would have missed them, and be suffering the greatest anxiety.





CHAPTER II.



GHAT bright March morning, when Jessie with her brother and sister were walking so briskly along the Wynham road, Mrs. Holmes was packing up a basket of eatables to take down to her three little favourites in their lonely cottage ; and as she walked along the lane which led from her house into the village, she was thinking a great deal about them. For she had at last hit upon what she felt sure would be the best plan for them, and that day she intended to talk to Jessie, and tell her that she would take her into her own service to be trained under the housemaid, while Charlie and Lucy should live with their coachman's

wife for the present ; so that the boy could learn to be useful in the stable, while little Lucy could go on with her schooling as before, and help Mrs. Morris with her two little children between times.

So with her mind full of this plan, which seemed both good and pleasant for the children, the kind lady went on to the cottage.

She tapped at the door—no one answered her, but she lifted the latch and went in expecting to find they were too busy to hear her. But the empty fire-place, and the deserted-looking room, puzzled her greatly, until she caught sight of the note addressed to herself upon the table, which explained it all.

Poor Mrs. Holmes ! she cried over that letter as if they had been children of her own who had run away from her ; but she was more distressed by the thought of the troubles and difficulties they would surely meet with, than at their ungrateful treatment of herself.

One thing seemed clear ; they must be found, if possible, and brought back to a safe home, for in London they would surely starve ; so all that day messengers were sent in different directions to

search for the lost children, but it was all in vain.

When days had gone by, and nothing was heard of them, Mrs. Holmes was forced to give up waiting for their return, so the cottage was let, and the old furniture sold, the little money it fetched being safely lodged in Elton penny bank in Jessie's name.

"For surely," said Mrs. Holmes, "the poor silly children will soon find out their mistake, and then they will write to tell me they are in trouble, and I can bring them home."

So after a week or two the villagers left off talking of the orphans' disappearance, and very soon they were almost forgotten by their Elton neighbours, but never by the one good friend who still watched and hoped for their return.

For the rest of that day on which we have seen the three children starting afresh on their journey, everything went well till evening, when they reached a little village just as it was growing dark, and Jessie looked about anxiously for some house where she might beg a night's shelter for herself and her brother and sister.

Summoning up all her courage, she asked an old man whom they met if there was any cheap lodging to be had, but he shook his head. "We don't think much of tramps in our village," he said. "Maybe, if you went to that farm yonder," and he pointed with his thumb towards a good sized house not many yards off, "the master'd let you lie in a corner of the barn, he's a kind body, he is."

Jessie winced under the word "tramps." Had it indeed come to that? That she and Charlie and Lucy, who had been so carefully reared, should be called by a name which she knew was applied to the roughest and lowest; perhaps that one word did more to convince the poor foolish child of her mistake, than any of the troubles which followed after.

Half-an-hour later, the children were sitting in the farm house kitchen eating a good supper, for the master of the house saw they were not common tramps or beggars, and he pitied them greatly; then they had a good bed made up in the hay loft, where they slept comfortably enough, starting again next morning on their journey.

Thus, for several days they managed, for everyone was very kind to them as they passed through the country villages, and many good wishes and pence and scraps of food were given to help them onward.

But after four days weary walking, Lucy began to be feverish and poorly, the child had not strength to bear the chilly air of night and early morning, and although they had not walked many miles each day, the fatigue had been more than she could stand. Jessie's courage and Charlie's bright hopes were sinking very fast, when they came to a large bustling town, where people brushed roughly by bidding them "get out of the way," and took no notice of their attempts to enquire for a lodging. Thanks to the kindness and help they had met with, the five shillings was still untouched, and Jessie had seven-pence in her pocket besides, so this, she thought, would last them a few days if they stayed in this town till Lucy was strong enough to travel on to London. At last, after frequent repulses, they succeeded in finding a house in a dirty back street where they were told they could stay the night by paying a shilling ; and miserable

as the small attic was, Jessie felt thankful enough for any place where she could get Lucy rest and sleep.

The poor little girl was too ill to eat, her throat was dry and parched, and her head burning. "Why Lucy, what ails you?" said her sister, "you're all of a shiver." The child replied that she did not feel very well, but she lay still, and after awhile fell asleep, though it was such an uneasy sleep, with such terrible dreams, that she started up again and again all trembling and frightened. When morning came at last, the child was in a burning fever calling wildly for "grandmother," and seeming not to know Jessie and Charlie as they bent over her. "Oh, Charlie, whatever shall we do?" sobbed Jessie. "It's all my fault. I ought not to have brought you both away from Elton. If Lucy dies, I shall never be happy again. Oh dear! if we only could get back, I never would do such a thing again. I'm sure Mrs. Holmes knew best if only we'd listened to her."

"Oh, perhaps Lucy will be better soon," said Charlie, who did not at all like even the thought of returning to Elton when they had got so far on

the way to London, of which he had thought and dreamed so long. "Cheer up, Jessie, we've got along wonderfully as yet, and all the money isn't gone."

"No, but what shall we do when it's spent," said Jessie; "I can't be looking for work with Lucy ill, and it won't last many days with paying for a lodging."

So after a little anxious conversation, Jessie sought the woman of the house, and saying her sister was ill, asked if they could rent the room for a week.

At first the woman was inclined to turn them out then and there, rather than have illness in the house, but her heart softened when she saw the poor girl's distress, and at last she agreed to let them have the attic for a week if they paid her half-a-crown. Jessie felt it was a great price to ask, yet she was so thankful for any shelter, that she went back quite joyfully to tell Charlie they could stay, although she did not know how they were going to manage for food.

"We must pray to God to help us," she said. "Oh, Charlie, I'm afraid we were very wilful.

We never asked God to guide us before we came away, and I believe it's all happened to punish us for doing what we liked instead of what He wished. Let us tell Him how sorry we are now, and perhaps He'll shew us what to do."

Two days passed and Lucy seemed no better, although she knew her brother and sister again. The child had been upset by exposure and want of sufficient food, and her little pale wan face, and feverish hands, made Jessie's heart ache. "Oh, Jessie dear, I do feel so bad. Do you think I'm going to die?" she said, on the third night after she had been tossing and moaning on the bed for a good while.

Jessie's tears fell fast upon the little head as she bent down over her sister. "Don't talk so, Lucy dear, I can't bear it. It's all my fault, and yet I *meant* to take such care of you. Oh! what would grandmother have said if she knew of this?"

"Give me a drink, I'm so thirsty," murmured the child. "Oh dear, oh dear! why doesn't morning come?"

Next day Jessie counted her money over with a troubled face; it was getting so very low.

"Charlie, couldn't you try and get a little place?" she said. "Maybe, if you asked at some of the shops they'd take you to run errands."

"Oh, I'm afraid," said Charlie, shrinking. "Come with me, Jessie, do."

But Jessie could not possibly leave her sister, so after some persuasion, Charlie went out to try and find employment in the town of Great Felton. It was wearying work; he was but nine years old, and most everyone he asked laughed, and told him he was not big enough to be of any use; while others said they did not want a boy,— "There were boys enough, and to spare, all about the town," so Charlie returned home in the evening with a heavy heart, and a very sad face.

Jessie was almost as disappointed as he, yet she tried to cheer him up. "Perhaps you'll have better luck to-morrow, Charlie," said she, and the little boy tried to think so; though when he remembered all the sharp looks and words he had received that day, it seemed very difficult to have to begin once more his search.

That night the children prayed still more earnestly for help, kneeling by the side of the miser-

able bed where Lucy lay almost unconscious ; but when they were saying the Lord's Prayer, and Jessie came to the words, " Give us this day our daily bread," her voice faltered, and after trying a moment to control herself, she burst into a violent fit of crying, which frightened Charlie. " Oh ! Jessie, don't do that," he said. " Are you going to be ill, too ? Oh ! what shall I do ? "

But his alarm roused the elder sister from her grief. " No, I'm not ill, dear," she said, " only I was thinking how we used to kneel by grandmother and say that, and though we were poor, and didn't know how to get on, I never thought we'd come to this. Oh, Charlie, unless God sends us some help soon we must starve. The money will be all gone to-morrow, after I've paid the rent."

Charlie's sleep was very disturbed that night. He was trying to think, before he closed his eyes, of some plan to earn money, and uneasy dreams troubled him till morning ; then he dressed himself, and went out early.

Poor little lad ! Often and often he would have given up in despair, but for the thought of

Lucy lying ill and weak in the miserable attic, and Jessie watching her with such a tearful anxious face. Shop after shop he went into, asking "if they wanted a boy," until at last a good-natured woman at a baker's seemed inclined to employ him.

"You're a little chap," she said smiling, "but it isn't always the big ones who do most work. Our lad left all of a sudden yesterday, and I want some one to run errands near home. Who can speak a word for you, if I try you?"

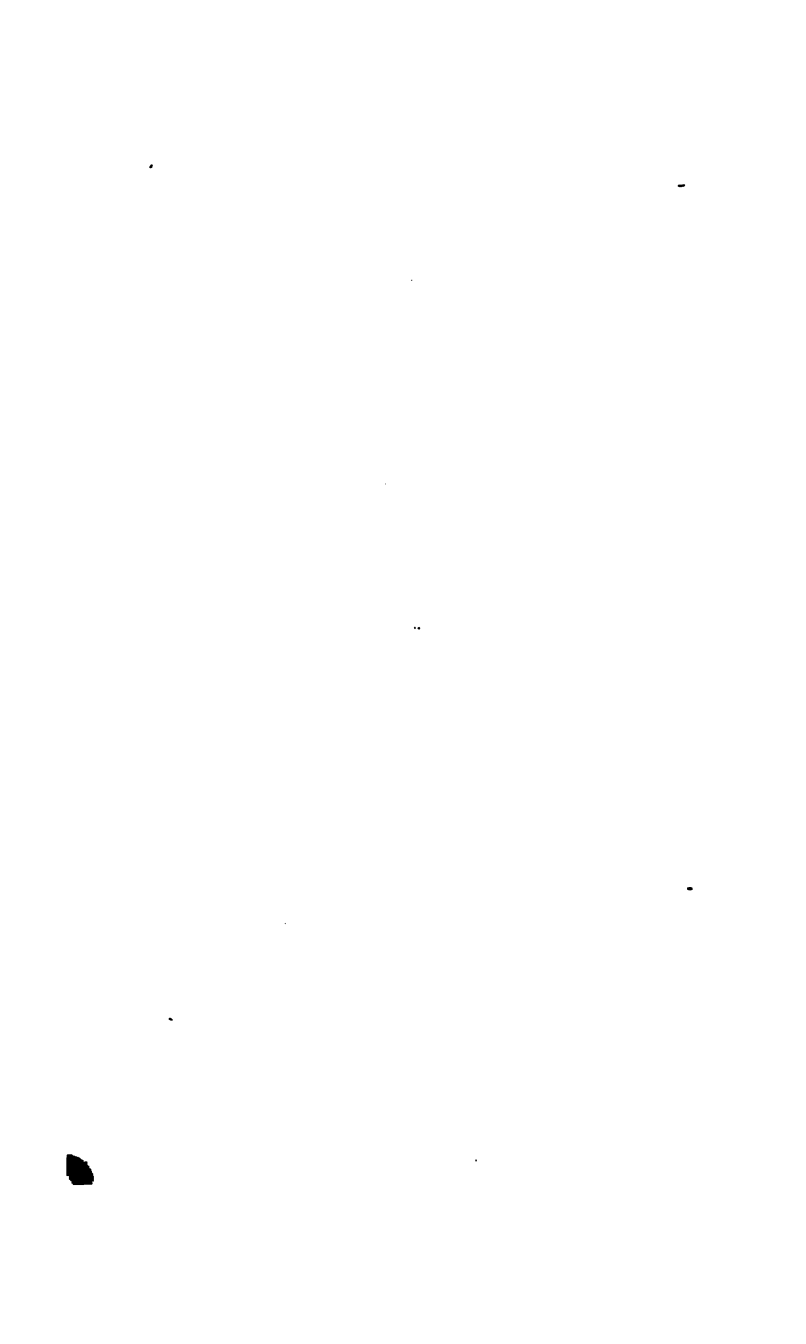
Charlie flushed crimson. "Nobody knows us here," he said. "We were on our way to London, only Lucy was too ill to go on."

The woman began to question him as to why they were going to London, and so the whole tale came out, and she felt so sorry for the orphan children that she promised to give Charlie a trial, beginning the next day, saying he should have two shillings a week and his meals to begin with. When she heard how poor they were, she tucked a large stale loaf under his arm, and bade him run home with it, for, said she, "I've got children of my own, and I know how they eat bread and butter."



"SHE TUCKED A LARGE STALE LOAF UNDER HIS ARM."—Page 32.

D



Charlie needed no second bidding to "run home," he was in such a hurry to tell Jessie his success, and all that Mrs. Franklin had said to him, that it seemed as if the way had never been so long.

"Jessie, Jessie, I've got a place!" he cried, bursting in at the door of their room. "It's at a baker's; and I'm to begin to-morrow."

"Hush, Charlie; Lucy's asleep," whispered Jessie, with an anxious glance at the sick child, who opened her eyes. "No, I wasn't asleep," she said, "what is Charlie talking about?"

So Charlie poured forth his tale, and set down the big loaf on the rickety table with an air of triumph.

"There, Jessie, I told you we'd get on. I don't see why it won't be as well to stay in Great Felton as to go to London," he said.

"I am so glad, and so thankful," said Jessie; "its God helping us, Charlie, because we've asked Him. He is so good to us, even though we've been so wilful and foolish. Now, if Lucy would only get better we might be happy."

"I am better," said the little weak voice.

"The night before last I thought Gōd would take me away, and I'm afraid I wasn't sorry to leave you, Jessie, for I felt so glad to think I wouldn't be tired or hungry any more; but I'm getting better now."

Jessie looked at the small white face and sighed, "You want some meat or something to make you strong, and I haven't got it for you. Oh, dear, if we were only back at Elton!"

"Don't be so stupid," put in Charlie; "I've got a place, and Lucy's better, what more do you want, Jessie, you're never satisfied?"

"Oh, Charlie, I don't mean to be dissatisfied, I'm sure, I'm so glad you've got a place, but you see that will only pay for this room, and I don't know where the money's to come from to buy food."

Charlie gave a long, low whistle; in his excitement and pleasure he had forgotten what a very little way two shillings a week would go.

"If I could only get a bit of needlework that would help till Lucy's better," said Jessie, presently. "Charlie, couldn't you take care of her this afternoon, while I go out and try to get some?"

You know I can sew very neatly, and perhaps I'd get employment."

So Charlie agreed, and Jessie tied on her bonnet and pinned on her shawl, stooping down to kiss Lucy before she went, and then very timidly she passed out into the noisy street.

At first she stood still, not knowing which way to turn; then taking the direction in which most people seemed going, she soon found herself amongst the largest shops in the town.

One after another refused her. All the work was machine done now-a-days, they said; and she would have turned away and gone home discouraged if, in the last outfitting shop she had enquired at, a lady had not spoken to her.

"Can you really sew neatly?" she asked, and Jessie answered that she could.

"It is so difficult to find a good sewer now that one has to take machine work; but I have some baby linen at home, I should like done by hand. Do you live far from here?"

Jessie said it was some little way, and named the street.

“Not a very respectable part,” said the lady.
“Is your home there?”

So Jessie had to explain that they had only taken a lodging there, until they could do better.

“You can come round to my house now, if you like, and I can give you the work—it will save time. If you do it well, I may have more for you.”

Jessie followed the lady into a genteel part of the town, to a large house, in the hall of which she was desired to wait until the parcel was ready, and after a few minutes a neat maid came to her and said, “There are six little shirts and three petticoats here. Mrs. Dudley would like them home by the end of the week, if you can manage it.”

That was Tuesday, and Jessie felt sure she could finish the work by the appointed time, so she promised to return it on the Saturday, and went home rather more happily than she had started.

When she got there she found the two children all excitement—wanting her to come that they might tell her the wonderful news that they had had a visitor; and indeed Jessie had guessed as much

before they had spoken, for as she opened the door she saw Lucy eating an orange with great satisfaction, and besides, there were two eggs lying on the table, and a small packet which looked like tea.

"You are better, darling," said Jessie, looking delightedly at Lucy, who nodded and gazed up at her with a brightness in her eyes which had not been there for many, many days. "The orange is so nice, Jessie, and she's such a kind lady, and she's coming to-morrow to see you."

"And I told her all about it, and how we'd run away from Elton, and how we'd walked ever so far, till Lucy took ill," said Charlie, "and I told her, too, I'd got a place."

"But who is it, and how did anyone find us out?" asked Jessie, getting very puzzled.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you that," said Charlie. "She goes all about to the houses to see anyone who's sick or poor, she says, and when she came here, Mrs. Stokes said, maybe she'd best come up and see us, so she came. And after she'd talked to Lucy a bit, she pulled two oranges out of her pocket, and gave them her, and then, when she

was going away, she took those two eggs and the little packet of tea out of her bag, and said perhaps if you boiled one for Lucy with a cup of tea, and some bread and butter, she'd eat it, most likely."

Jessie did not quite like it. Her naturally proud spirit shrank for a moment from the idea of receiving help from a stranger, but she remembered as quickly that by her own rashness she had left her former friends, and got plunged in all this distress, and that she must be grateful to God if He raised up anyone to assist her.

"I'm so glad you've got an orange Lucy. I've been longing to buy you one, but they're getting scarce now. So this lady is coming to-morrow?"

"Yes, she said she would," answered both children, and Lucy added, "She isn't pretty or young, Jessie, but she speaks so kindly. I like to look at her face so much."

Jessie soon made some tea, and all three felt better for it, and talked a great deal about the lady's visit, and Charlie's place, and the sewing. Things all seemed brighter, and they said their prayers that night with very thankful hearts, for

they were beginning to know for themselves then, what their grandmother had often told them, that wherever they might be, in whatever sorrow or trouble, God was always near, and He would never refuse to listen to them, if they prayed earnestly from their hearts.

It was very early next morning when Jessie awoke, but she rose and dressed herself, for she wanted to get to her sewing; besides, Charlie must be off betimes to his new place.

He had been told by Mrs. Franklin at the baker's, to be there punctually by half-past six o'clock, but long before then Charlie was off, pacing up and down in front of the shop until he thought it was the right time.

Meantime, Jessie and Lucy were talking quite cheerfully, for the child was decidedly better, and was full of the anticipated visit. "I wish we could see down into the street," she said, "then I'd sit at the window and watch for the lady." However, she was still weak enough to be obliged to lie patiently on her bed until nearly twelve o'clock, when the sound of footsteps was heard on the stairs. "That's the lady," said Lucy, in a

hurried whisper, just as a pleasant voice was heard outside the door asking to come in, and Jessie, blushing very much, rose from her work to set a chair for her visitor.





CHAPTER III.



N less than five minutes all Jessie's shyness was forgotten, and she was talking to the visitor as confidently as Charlie and Lucy had done the day before, keeping back nothing as she spoke of the reasons which had made them resolve on leaving Elton, and which she felt now had been a mistake.

"Yet I really asked God to take care of us, and show us what to do," she added, looking up in Miss Cunningham's kind face.

"And He *has* taken care of you in a wonderful way, dear child," said that lady. "It is quite right to ask God to shew us what to do, but we

must not be in a hurry. God often keeps us waiting for answers to our prayers, but you were impatient."

Jessie drooped her head over her sewing, for she knew this was very true.

"And have you kept near to God in all the trouble?" asked their new friend, and this time little Lucy spoke up saying, "Oh yes, ma'am, Jessie and Charlie never missed their prayers once, and I said mine too except when I was so very ill, and then I only asked Jesus to love me and take care of me."

"And who taught you all to love God, and trust Him?"

"Oh, it was grandmother," replied both children together. "All our lives she made us pray to Him, and then she talked of Him as if He was always quite near."

"So He is," said Miss Cunningham; "He is not far from any one of us you know, and certainly He has watched over you in a special way, and perhaps some good lesson will come out of your false step."

"I think we shall get on," said Jessie. "Charlie

has got this place, and I have the sewing, and I'll try for more ; so between us I think we'll manage to live."

But Miss Cunningham shook her head. "It is not to be thought of. It would never do for three young children to be living alone in a great town like this, where there is so much sin and misery. My dear child, you do not know what evil might come to you and your brother and sister, with no one to watch over you."

"But, indeed, we will try hard to be good," pleaded Jessie.

"That is much, but it is not all. We must not be too sure of ourselves, but keep out of danger and pray always, 'Lead us not into temptation.'"

"Will Charlie and Lucy have to go to school then?" asked Jessie in a low, sad voice.

"I cannot say. I seem to have been brought to you by God to help you in your difficulty, so I must do what appears to me best; and that will be to write to this lady you tell me of, who lives in your village, telling how you are here, and perhaps she will still take an interest in you and help you."

Neither of the children quite liked that. In spite of their troubles, and in spite of their consciousness of having taken a wrong step, there was a pleasure in being together and free from control which they were not quite willing to give up ; but this new friend was so kind, and yet so firm, that they could not make any objection, only when Charlie came home they told him very sorrowfully that Mrs. Holmes had been written to.

For the next few days the children struggled on, Lucy was growing better, and Charlie liked his place, and the woman once or twice gave him bread to take home—so with the addition of what Jessie earned from her sewing, they managed to live, though it was in a hard rough way.

Then Sunday came, and for the first time since they had left home, the three went out together to God's house, and it was a rest and help to them, for they liked to join in the prayers and singing, and even in the sermon there were many things they could understand.

"I wonder if there's a Sunday School here, Charlie ; it would seem almost like Elton if there was," said Jessie, as they were coming out ; so,

after a moment's shyness and hesitation, Charlie went up to a lad a little bigger than himself to ask the question, and found that there was a Sunday School, and that it opened at half-past two o'clock.

So, after their dinner, which consisted of some tea and bread with a thin scraping of butter on it, they all went off again, and Jessie and Lucy were put to sit together in a class of girls, while Charlie found a place by the side of the boy whom he had seen outside the chapel, who knew him again, and made a sign to him to come across to his class.

"Do you want to come to this Sunday School?" he asked. And Charlie said he did.

"All right," replied his new friend, "I'll get our teacher to have you here, you'll like him ever so."

Just then the gentleman who taught the class came in, and his eye fell upon Charlie directly.

"Who's that," he asked.

"He's along of me," answered Robert Foster, as the boy's name proved to be. "May he stop in this class, Mr. Grey?"

"We'll see what he knows, and hear what our

Superintendent says," replied Mr. Grey, smiling kindly at Charlie. And to the boy's satisfaction he was allowed to remain when they found he was up to the rest in his knowledge of Scripture.

Meantime Jessie and Lucy had been getting on well on the girls' side. At first they felt strange and dull, for the other children gazed at them, and then whispered together; and one or two smiled and tittered in a way which brought a flush to Jessie's cheek, and tears to little Lucy's eyes. But when the teacher came amongst them, they grew quite quiet, and forgot the new-comers.

"But this little one is too small for my class," said the lady turning to Lucy. "You must go with the smaller children, my child."

Lucy clung nervously to her sister, and was just on the point of crying, when a familiar voice said close by, "Why, Jessie and Lucy, I *am* glad to see you here," and to their surprise it was their first friend and visitor, Miss Cunningham; but still more surprising it was to find that she taught the younger class for which Lucy was destined, and the child went off with her, quite happily for the rest of the afternoon.

It was all very pleasant, and as the sisters and their brother walked home after school had closed, they felt no longer strangers in the town.

"I wonder whether we'll get a letter from Elton to-morrow," said Jessie, the last thing before they went to bed, "and I wonder what Mrs. Holmes will say. I think, somehow, she'll forgive us and help us yet; and though we're happy together here, I'll be very glad to see Elton once more. I have had a lesson this time of what comes of taking my own way."

But Charlie was of a different mind. "I don't want to go back," he said. "I feel sure between us we shall scrape on very well; and, after all, town is better than a little poking village like Elton." Charlie was already feeling the pleasure of freedom.

Next day came, however, and the next—a week passed by, and still nothing was heard of Mrs. Holmes; and Jessie began to be afraid that she was indeed displeased with their wilfulness, and did not care any more what became of them. Miss Cunningham looked very serious about it all when she came to see the children. "I see nothing

possible, but for you to struggle on here," she said, "that is, if we do not get any letter from this lady who was your friend; but you will find it hard work, and I am afraid you will have reason very often to repent leaving Elton. Still I will do all I can for you," she added kindly, "and I know several ladies who have promised to keep Jessie supplied with needlework for the present."

Jessie thanked her and tried to smile, but her heart was very heavy; she had not known before how much she had been trusting to Mrs. Holmes to be a friend if they were in any great need; now, the thought that they had lost her, lost her too by their own ingratitude, was very hard to bear. Poor Jessie did not know then that their kind friend was far away from Elton when Miss Cunningham's letter reached there, and that it was months before it came into her hands.

Spring had really come by that time, and the sun showed its face in the town, but the back streets looked as dirty as ever, and all the children in those parts played out of doors from morning till night, so that there was noise everywhere. Boys

were trying—not very successfully,—to fly kites, girls played with skipping ropes or battledore and shuttlecock, or nursed babies on the doorstep, or climbed railings. They were merry enough, it seemed by their chatter and laughter, but unfortunately, you could hear dreadful words sometimes in the midst of their play,—words which made Jessie shudder and draw little Lucy aside if they passed along. They never went out for amusement, only to go errands, taking needlework home when it was finished, or fetching some from the ladies who employed Jessie; but as the days grew warmer and closer, they longed for fresh air, and green fields, and bright sunshine sadly enough.

There, in their little room at the top of the tall house, Jessie sat wearily at her sewing, while Lucy played with an old doll a lady had given her, or read in their few little books, or looked out from the window upon the chimney pots and housetops all round. And then the children would talk of Elton, of how the birds were singing in the big trees there, and the dandelions and blue-bells and cowslips were all in bloom there, and then the

talk always ended by "wondering" if they should ever see the little village again, and if Mrs. Holmes would forgive them after a while.

Jessie found it was indeed a hard struggle to live, and if Miss Cunningham and others had not been very good to them, I know not how they could have lived; still with all the kindness they received, they knew what it was to be hungry very often, and not to be certain of a meal from one day to the other.

But another trouble was coming, which seemed worse than anything which poor Jessie had ever imagined could be, and that was when Charlie began to alter, and stay away from home more and more after work was done, and on Sundays. And then he grew cross and unkind, often speaking sharp words to Jessie, and pushing Lucy from him when she heard him coming up the stairs and went running to meet him, returning to Jessie with the tears in her eyes, and the news that "Charlie was so cross."

Many a time Jessie tried to ask her brother what was the matter, whether he was ill or unhappy, but he only bade her "mind her own

business," and stayed away more ; so, that after a while, she said nothing, but thought of Charlie by night and day, wondering what had come over him.

And then Jessie remembered how she had promised her good old grandmother to watch over Charlie, and not let him get into bad company. Ah ! she couldn't keep that promise now, for Charlie was out and about with all the idle lads in the street, and nothing she could say seemed any use.

This, then, was part of the fruits of coming away from their own village, where Charlie would have been better looked after, and where he would not have heard words and seen conduct such as had grown familiar to him now in the back streets of that big town. The next thing was, that Charlie left off going with them to chapel on Sundays. "*It was hard if a fellow couldn't sleep a bit one morning in the week,*" he said, and he would lie in bed till Jessie and Lucy were gone, and then rise just in time to eat some dinner before going off for a long walk with his idle companions,—for Sunday School was given up too. Charlie, who for the

first few weeks had been so pleased with his class, so regular in his seat, now declared he "wasn't going to be shut up in that hot place the only afternoon he had to amuse himself," and in spite of Jessie's entreaties and Lucy's tears, he refused to go with them any more.

Things had been like this for several weeks, and Jessie had kept her trouble and fears to herself, for somehow she could not bear that anyone should know that Charlie was not what he used to be ; even when his Sunday School teacher called to ask about him she tried to excuse him, saying he had been working hard at his place and was so tired he had not been able to come. But as he grew worse instead of better, more cross, more away, more determined to be with other boys, who she knew could do him no good, Jessie at last confided her secret unhappiness to Miss Cunningham, who was indeed troubled and grieved by it. "Ah, my child, you see how bad it is for you to live in a town like this with no one to take charge of you. I don't want to reproach you for I know you have seen your own foolishness, but it was a terrible mistake you made that day you left Elton. I

cannot think what is to be done. I will try and see Charlie, and talk to him, but it is very likely he won't listen to me. However, God can make him a good boy again, and you must pray very often for him."

But at the thought of Miss Cunningham seeing and speaking to Charlie, Jessie was terribly distressed.

"Oh, don't say anything to him," she cried, "he'll know I've been telling you, and he'll be so vexed, he'll love me less than now ; ah, I ought not to have told of him, and yet I was so unhappy, I couldn't help it," and the girl's eyes looked pleadingly at Miss Cunningham through the tears which filled them.

"You were quite right to tell me, Jessie," she said. "How can I possibly be your friend unless I know how things are really going with you. However, you may be quite at ease, for I promise you I will contrive not to let Charlie know you have spoken to me. I shall ask him, the first time I see him, why he is never at Sunday School, and I am sure that will be quite enough."

Next day an opportunity came, though in a way

which Miss Cunningham had not expected, for, as she turned the corner of a street in the part of the town where her home was, she saw a crowd of boys gathered round two who were fighting, and the second glance showed her that one of the two was none other than Charlie.

For a second she stood still, too shocked and surprised to speak; then she walked quickly through the group of boys, and laying her hand on a shoulder of the two combatants, said, "Charlie, is *this* the way you go about your work?"

If a policeman had "collared" him with his rough grasp, Charlie could scarcely have turned paler, or looked more scared than he did, as he caught sight of Miss Cunningham's face, looking sterner than he could have imagined possible.

"What are you doing here?" repeated the lady, pointing to the basket of bread which Charlie had set down upon the pavement, while he had out his fight. Still the boy was speechless, and the rest shrunk off, looking very foolish and ashamed of themselves.

"He hit me," murmured Charlie at last, "and I, I——"

"And you did *what*?" asked Miss Cunningham.

"I was just giving him one or two hits back again," said Charlie, getting a trifle bolder at the mention of his wrongs.

"If anyone had told me that you could be seen amongst a crowd of dirty street lads, *fighting*, I would not have believed it," said Miss Cunningham. "Is this the way you keep your promise of being a good boy; is this what you learn at Sunday School?"

Charlie hung his head.

"I haven't been there for a week or two," he said.

"No, I know you haven't for a good many weeks. I was going to ask you why; but I need not. I see for myself that you have left off trying to please God, and I do not wonder that you are getting a bad boy when I find you with such wicked companions. Pick up that basket, and come with me back to the shop. I shall tell your mistress how you act when you are sent out on errands."

That was something too dreadful to think of. Charlie knew what no one else did, that already Mrs. Franklin was growing dissatisfied with him, and had threatened to send him away. If Miss Cunningham carried out her threat, he would surely lose his place, and then what was to be done? With all the earnestness he could, he entreated her to forgive him for "just that once."

"Charlie, I don't know what to say," answered the lady; "I am so sorry for you all, so sorry for Jessie who is working so hard to get a living, that I don't like to bring you into trouble. But that would be better if it taught you a lesson of what happens by getting amongst bad companions."

However, as Charlie begged to be excused, and promised faithfully to begin to do better, Miss Cunningham let him go his way, but before she parted with him she spoke kindly to him about the means of keeping out of temptation.

"You promise me now to be a good boy," she said. "But you can't keep it by yourself, can you?"

The boy muttered "No."

"You have been taught over and over again, Charlie, that no one can do right unless God helps them. But you know, too, that besides asking God's help we must try ourselves, and especially we must put ourselves in the way of good, and keep as far as we can from seeing or hearing evil. Now by staying away from chapel and Sunday School, have you been putting yourself in the way of good things?"

Charlie blushed all over his face. "I'll go next Sunday. I will indeed," he said, and he meant it just then.

"I shall look for you there," said his friend. "And now, good-bye ; try and be very sorry, and ask God to pardon you for all you have done to grieve Him," but as she went to her own home, Miss Cunningham's heart had many an anxious fear for the motherless, homeless children.

That evening Jessie and Lucy were surprised to see Charlie come home straight from his work, looking and speaking more pleasantly than he had done for a long while. "I'll tell you what, Jessie," he said before he went to bed, "I ain't going to play about the streets like I've been doing of late.

I'm afraid I've been cross too, but I mean to turn over a new leaf now."

Jessie kissed him, with all her old hope and happiness returning; however hard she had to work, and however difficult things might seem, she felt that nothing would be very bad if Charlie was his own better self once more.





CHAPTER IV.

IT had been Wednesday when Charlie resolved to "turn over a new leaf." All Thursday he tried to be a good boy, in the evening he came home once more to his sisters, but he felt a little less inclined to be kind than the night before ; on Friday he began to try still less and indulged in sundry games at marbles with lads in the street, when he had been sent out on his round with bread ; and by Saturday evening all his good resolutions were scattered to the wind, and he felt that to keep his promise was something too hard for him.

Sunday rose, bright and sunny ; from every

church in Great Felton the bells rang out joyously bidding people come and join in the worship of God, and Jessie and Lucy said happily to each other, "Charlie is going to chapel with us to-day. It will be so pleasant again."

But, to their bitter disappointment, Charlie obstinately refused; though they joined in entreating him to go, and reminded him of his promise, he declared he should have a walk—"it was too bright to mope in-doors; chapel-going would keep for wet Sundays when there was nothing else to do."

"Oh, Charlie, whatever has come to you?" exclaimed Jessie. "Have you forgotten grandmother, and how she taught you to love to go to God's house ever since you were almost a baby? And when we first came here too, you were as ready to go as anyone, and were so pleased with your Sunday School, too. But you'll go this afternoon, won't you?"

"No," growled the boy, sullenly; "I aint going to please anybody."

"But, Charlie, I thought you liked your teacher so, and he's been to ask about you, too, and hoped to see you in your class again."

"Let him come, I don't care," said Charlie. "No one can make me go unless I like. I'll please myself now ; and I tell you Jessie, it's no use bothering me. I've promised to go for a walk with some fellows I know and I shan't come home till evening, so there !" and the boy whistled a street air, and tried to look as defiant as he knew how.

"Clang, clang," went all the church bells ; there was no time to be lost before the service at their own chapel began, Jessie knew, and yet she lingered one more minute to plead with her brother.

"Charlie, I don't ask you to go with us because it would make Lucy and me so happy, though you know it would," and her voice faltered. "But for grandmother's sake, her who's up in heaven waiting for us to come to her some day, won't you just this time stop away from those boys, and spend Sunday as she'd like you too?"

Charlie turned his back and looked steadily out of the window at the opposite house ; he knew well that in his heart he was wishing to give in—he felt the struggle between right and wrong within

him, but he was so sure that Jessie's anxious face would make him break his resolution, that he would not meet it, for he was determined not to be laughed at any more for a "muff," and a "milk-sop," and for going to chapel and school "like a girl."

So, wrong conquered, and with his back well towards his sisters, Charlie shouted out, "I tell you I won't. Be off with you and leave a fellow alone, I say."

They went then, quickly and so quietly that the poor unhappy boy hardly knew they were gone until he heard their footsteps on the stairs; perhaps those were the most miserable moments he ever passed in his life.

Quickly through his mind there passed the memory of Sundays in the old happy time, when he had been a different boy—of the Sabbath evenings when he had bade his good old grandmother good-night, and she had blessed him and bidden him grow up in the love and fear of God; of the many resolves he had made when she died, to help and protect his sisters; of his Sunday School teacher in the little village they had left, as well

as the new friend he had found in Great Felton. All these thoughts passed through his mind more quickly than I could write them, and he wished with all his heart that he had never begun to do wrong ; but he had not the courage to break through the evil influence which was around him.

Eleven o'clock struck out from the parish church, in a quarter of an hour he was to meet his bad companions at the end of the street, so Charlie brushed up his hair and tried to shake off his gloomy feelings, but he was not very successful. It seemed as if, do what he might, he could not rid himself of the thought of his sisters kneeling in God's house. Jessie, with her thin serious face—ah ! it had grown thin and anxious from work and care—and little Lucy so fair and innocent-looking. Perhaps they were thinking of him—praying for him—perhaps, even, they were crying about him ; and, at the thought, Charlie was very near crying himself, only the fear of red eyes made him brave.

He could almost guess what hymns they might be singing, and how the minister would look as he got up to preach, while the sunshine lit up the

chapel filled with attentive people ; all this came into his mind, sorely against his will, as he left the house and went up the street to wait by the lamp-post, as he had promised Jack Turner and the rest.

Poor Jessie in her seat at chapel, little thought how Charlie was longing to be with them ; how, in his heart he repented falling away from God, and how vexed he was that he had spoken to her so roughly ; she only felt that for some reason he had ceased to love her, and she was going over and over to herself all that happened, to see if she could remember how it all began, and whether at the first she had put him out about anything. • In vain—she could not recall one thing, beyond the fact that Charlie had picked up an acquaintance whom he called “ Jack,” and after that, all his tales were filled with the doings of “ Jack and I,” and gradually he came to be less and less at home, until things got to be as bad as they were then.

All Jessie could do now was to beg of God to shew her how to win back Charlie's love, how to help him to do right, and to forgive her if she had led him into the midst of temptation in the great town where there was no one to control him.

When service was over, the two sisters came out with the rest of the people, but Miss Cunningham's quick eye sought them, and she tapped Jessie on the shoulder, and bade her walk a little way along the road towards her own home.

"Where is Charlie?" she asked. "I saw him in the week, and he promised me to be here to-day."

Jessie looked distressed. "He promised me too but he is gone out with some boys."

The lady's face was both sad and displeased as she said, "I don't know what is to be done. Charlie has evidently got amongst bad companions, and he must be saved from them, or he will grow worse. I saw him fighting, Jessie; fighting in the midst of a group of lads in the street."

Jessie's face flushed crimson, and the tears fell fast, when she heard that.

"Oh, Miss Cunningham," she said, "we must get Charlie away. Won't you please write once more to Mrs. Holmes and tell her how sorry I am for coming away? I wasn't half so sorry at first—I didn't see it all then as I do now. I thought we could take care of ourselves if we only got

work, and I never knew any harm would come of it. Please tell her I see how wrong I've been, and if she'll only get Charlie away from this place I'll work hard, and do anything she wants me to ; indeed I will."

Miss Cunningham promised to write, and tried to comfort the poor girl ; but it was a miserable Sunday for them, and not until it was nearly dark did Charlie come home, and then he never spoke, only said he was tired and would go off to bed at once.

When Lucy was fast asleep, Jessie lay awake thinking—most of her thoughts were very, very sad ; but mixed with them was one bright hope connected with the letter to Mrs. Holmes. Surely something would come out of it, and he would be taken away from the bad company she was sure he had fallen into, and then they might all be happy again.

Meanwhile Charlie was tossing restlessly about from side to side. *Tired* he was certainly, as he had professed to be, but his misery kept him awake, for next day was Monday, and none but himself knew what trouble and disgrace awaited him.

Those weeks of absence from chapel and Sunday-school, of idle walks and bad company, had worked a change far worse than the absence of his merry laugh and bright smile ; his habits of truth were gone, from one thing to another he had fallen "by little and little," until he had given way to dishonesty, and that dishonesty had been found out.

In the beginning Charlie had not *meant* to do anything very bad, as he told himself ; going about with his companions he had often wanted a stray penny or so to buy sweets, or apples, or string, or tops, like the rest did, and it was not always he had one handy. So at the first he borrowed one from sixpence which a customer had paid him when he left the bread, and he fully meant to ask Jessie for it and return it next day, only it turned out that when he went home he hadn't the heart to ask her for one of her hard-earned pennies to make up for what he had wasted ; so he decided to wait until his weekly wages were paid and make an excuse for the money by saying he was to receive it when he "called again." But Charlie found that having fivepence in his pocket belong-

ing to some one else brought its temptations ; it happened that he had such special need for a few halfpence just then, and it would be just as easy to pay back the whole sixpence as part—that was the way he tampered with his conscience, although it reproached him constantly and bitterly.

When Saturday came, Charlie knew Jessie had not had a very good week's work, and needed all he had to bring, so he put off his mistress with another excuse, and thought he should find it easier to repay the sixpence at the end of another week than he did then.

He made it all right for that time by a piece of "good-luck," as he called it. A lady in the street gave him sixpence for rescuing her little pet dog from a big mastiff who was fighting it, so Charlie thought himself highly fortunate that no one knew anything about it, and that the money was put right so easily. Poor boy, he forgot then the One who *did* know, the watchful eye which *did* see ; he forgot, too, that one sin unrepented of, generally leads on to worse, and his second fall came quickly after the first, and did not cost him nearly so many twinges of conscience.

And thus, finding "borrowing" so easy, he had gone on with it until somehow, (and he could not think where the money was gone) he owed Mrs. Franklin half-a-crown ; and, worst of all, as he thought, she suspected him, and after receiving a number of excuses, she had told him that Saturday night when he went home, that she was going herself to the house where he left the bread to enquire about it. So, "tired" as he was, no wonder he could not sleep, he was thinking far too nervously of the coming day, wondering whether Mrs. Franklin had carried out her threat, if she would be very angry, whether he should lose his place, and if so, what Jessie would feel, and how they should manage to live. Monday morning's dawn was most unwelcome to Charlie, yet, like other hard things, it had to be faced, although his face paled and his heart thumped against his waistcoat as he reached the shop door.

There was nothing said at first. Charlie went about his work as usual, eyeing everyone rather nervously to see if he could observe anything in their looks or manner to set his fears at rest ; sometimes he thought Mrs. Franklin spoke more sharply

than usual, at others he fancied there was a sound of pity in her voice which there wouldn't have been if she was angry—still the day seemed sadly too long, and he had never wished so much for evening before.

"You needn't come any more," said the mistress, when all was done. Charlie's eyes widened and he turned as pale as a sheet of paper. "No, you needn't look so frightened," she said, "I've a right to be angry, I know, for you've treated me badly, and I've tried to be a friend to you. But I've thought it over since Saturday night, and I don't forget I've boys of my own that might go wrong too, if they were left alone in the world as you are, so I shan't be hard on you. Yet I'm not going to have a boy about the place I can't trust, and I'm working hard for my living, and I can't afford to lose even a shilling or two, so we'd best part. I shan't say anything to anyone, for I don't want to harm you, but I can't give you a character, of course."

And that was all! If she had stormed at him, boxed his ears, threatened him with the policeman, it wouldn't have been half so bad to bear, as to see his mistress looking so sorry for him. Charlie

gulped down his tears with difficulty, "I-I-I'm sorry, I never meant to steal, I meant to pay it back," but there he stopped, for he hadn't another word to say.

"I don't know its much use speaking of it," said Mrs. Franklin. "I always thought you were one of those sort who go to church, and such like, and try to do right. I don't pretend to be a pious kind of person myself, but I hope I do what's fair and honest to my neighbours, and I thought, of course, you could be trusted. There good-night; and if you take my advice, you'll be warned in time, and turn over a new leaf."

More ashamed and wretched than could be described, he went towards home. "Turn over a new leaf!" Oh! if any words could have cut him deeply, those did; the very words he had used when he made his promise to Jessie less than a week before. Where was the use now, he thought despairingly. How was he to do right when he'd lost his place and his character, and there was not a soul in all Great Felton to speak a word for him. And then what was to be done? Must poor Jessie work harder and he only be a

burden to her, and how grieved she would be when she knew what he had done, for he did not see how he could keep it from her. Truly the lad was finding out the bitter consequences of sin just then.

"Why, here's Charlie," cried little Lucy, in surprise, as he opened the room door. "Why Charlie, you haven't been home so early for ever so long."

"There, don't bother," muttered her brother, but as the child's face clouded a softer feeling came into his heart, and he pulled her to him and kissed her, a thing he had not done for many a week, not since Jack had laughed at him for caring about his sisters. "I'm tired, and not quite well, Lucy; I didn't mean to be so cross."

Jessie looked up from her sewing—that endless sewing—"I've got a little tea and some bread, will you have it dear?" "No, no, I've had my supper," said Charlie. "It isn't that I'm hungry—Oh Jessie, it's no use hiding it, it may as well come out first as last. I've lost my place, and worse still, it's my own fault!"

For an instant Jessie's cheeks turned a shade

paler, but for her brother's sake she controlled herself. "Perhaps you'll get another," she said, as cheerfully as she could. "You must try ; Great Felton's a big place, and there must be a many lads wanting in it."

Charlie shook his head mournfully, he knew that a boy without a friend and without a character stood but a poor chance in that town or any other.

Jessie saw there was some secret at the bottom of the story, so she wisely kept from asking any questions, and Charlie went to the bed in the little closet which he called his room, without having owned the truth ; but when she heard him sobbing there under the scanty bed-clothes, the kind little sisterly heart could restrain itself no longer, and in spite of the fear of vexing him, Jessie went in, and kneeling down on the floor with one arm thrown round him, begged him to tell her what had troubled him.

"You'll be so shocked, Jessie," sobbed Charlie, for all his got up "big-boy" airs were gone now, and he hid his face on her neck, as he had done many a time at home in smaller sorrows. "I've been bad and wicked and you'll not forget it, and

you'll be telling me of it always—I know you will."

"Oh Charlie, I won't, indeed I won't ;" said Jessie. "If I ever did such a thing I'm more sorry than I can say. Oh please tell me—perhaps its not so bad as you think, and anyway it will be better to know."

So, with great difficulty the tale came out, and grieved and shocked as Jessie certainly was, she never reproached her brother by a word or look.

"Its been all very wrong and dreadful, Charlie, I know," she said as she wiped his eyes and her own; "but God will forgive you this and every sin if you are really sorry, and ask him for Christ's sake to wash the stain away."

"I have asked Him, I do ask Him," sobbed Charlie. "But what shall we do Jessie? How can we live unless I get a place ; and you see I've no one to speak for me. Its all very well for Mrs. Franklin to bid me turn over a new leaf, but I can't see what's to become of us."

Jessie tried to cheer him with the hope she found it hard to feel herself. "We must 'trust and hope,' as grandmother used to say. Dear

grandmother ! how her words do seem to come back now, most as if I heard her speak them."

"Don't, Jessie," groaned Charlie. "Don't speak to me of grandmother. What would she have done if she had been alive and knew I was a thief?"

"She'd be grieved, Charlie, I know, but she'd want you most of all to be sorry and get God's pardon. Oh its getting so late dear I must go, for Lucy's not asleep and I've got to be up early to finish some work. Good-night dear dear Charlie; its all hard and dark, still God is sure to help us, *quite sure*," and Jessie lay down to rest, saying that over and over to herself, because she felt it so hard to trust, and it seemed as if the very sound of the words would help her then.





CHAPTER V.



DON'T know whether Jessie, or her brother's, face was palest when they met next morning. Evidently neither had had much rest, and Lucy looked from one to the other with an anxious face. She only knew that Charlie had lost his place, and that her sister had asked her not to talk about it; but she guessed that there was something very sad which could make both of them look as they did.

Their scanty breakfast was soon over, and Jessie started on her walk with her completed work, leaving Lucy and Charlie at home together.

Poor Charlie! he tried to sing and whistle, and

look out of the window, and forget that there was anything the matter, but somehow all his efforts ended in failure, and he looked as cast down as he felt; whilst Lucy kept shyly in the furthest corner of the room, trying to read and amuse herself, though she glanced across at him once or twice, wishing he would speak to her. It was so sad to be left at home there instead of going with Jessie, and then for Charlie to do like that!

Both were relieved when the elder sister returned with a fresh supply of work, which had given her new courage. "And see Lucy, see Charlie," she added, opening a basket which hung on her arm, and taking from it a piece of meat for cooking, a packet of rice, and some tea and sugar. "Mrs. Howell gave me these, because she said she'd heard from Miss Cunningham what hard work we had to get along, and she liked to help us."

Meat was indeed a rarity with them, and after it was cooked and eaten, all three felt considerably better and brighter. "I'll tell you what, Jessie, I'll go out now, and see if I can get anything to do," said Charlie. "I don't care what it is. I'd

sooner sweep a crossing than let you slave for me."

To his surprise, Jessie looked more grieved than pleased at the proposal; the fact was she was afraid of Charlie falling in with bad companions in the streets.

"Hadn't you better stay in," she said rather timidly, for she was so very fearful of being unkind to him now he was in trouble. "Perhaps Miss Cunningham may come in, and she'd like to see you, and she might know of a place, or tell us what to be looking after."

Perhaps she could not have said anything which would have brought Charlie to his feet more rapidly.

"Then I'm off," he cried. "I wouldn't see Miss Cunningham for anything. I felt before as if I couldn't look at her ever again, and now, now when I've lost my place—here give me my cap Lucy."

But Jessie stood between him and the door.

"Just a second Charlie," she pleaded. "Listen to me for just a second, and then if you wish to go I won't hinder you. Wouldn't it be better to



"AND SEE LUCY, AND CHARLIE, MRS. FOWELL GAVE ME
THESE."—Page 79.

tell Miss Cunningham? You see she's our only friend, and she's so kind that we ought to be quite honest with her; and of course she can't help knowing you've left your place, and she's sure to ask why, and oh, if you would but tell her yourself."

Charlie looked at the door, and then at his cap. "I couldn't Jessie," he said. "I'd do it if I could but I daren't. What would she think of me?" Yet even as he spoke, the thought came that Jessie was right, and that, hard and disagreeable as it might be, it was better than to have his fault and disgrace found out later.

"If we want to get you another place, I don't see how it's to be done, except she or Mr. Gray speak for you, Charlie. And I am almost sure they'd be more willing to do it if you told out the truth, than if there was something hidden and secret about it."

Charlie's breath came in quick short gasps: right and wrong were having a hard time of it within his heart, but this once right got the victory.

"Very well," he said, rather moodily, "it's got to be as you like now, I suppose. Well, I'll stop."

Though the words were ungracious, Jessie did not very much mind, for she knew how hard things were for Charlie just then. Indeed, when Miss Cunningham *did* call in, Jessie looked as timid and shy as if she, and not he, had been the culprit, and she helped him tell the tale as much as ever she could.

Their friend was very good to them. She saw the effort Charlie was making to own his sin, and believing he was sincerely sorry, she hoped his fall might be the means, by God's blessing, of saving him from a bad life; and she talked very kindly to him, not forgetting the wrong he had done, not trying to make light of it, but endeavouring to show him the cause of his going astray, and that the only way to avoid it in the future was to keep nearer to God, and honour His holy day.

Before she left, she promised to let them know if she heard of any employment suited for Charlie, and bade them keep up their courage, and trust in God, who would never leave or forsake them.

"Have you heard from Elton, Miss?" Jessie asked timidly, as she went downstairs to the door

with Miss Cunningham. But she was cast down by hearing that no letter had come, and the tears were in her eyes as she went back to her sewing.

All this long while, kind good Mrs. Holmes had not forgotten her little friends. Very often she talked of them, and still more often thought about them, wondering where they were, and praying God to take care of them and keep them from evil. But directly after they had left the village, she too had been called abroad by the death of a near relative, where she had remained; and although letters were directed to be sent on after her, by some mischance the one Miss Cunningham had first written was put aside, and did not come to light from the corner of a drawer which was seldom opened, until long after, when Mrs. Holmes was at home again, and the orphans comfortably settled after all their troubles. But the second letter fared differently, for it arrived the beginning of the week in which the kind lady was expected back at Elton, and there she found it on her return, and her heart was full of pleasure when she read the message Jessie had sent her. For Mrs. Holmes was not angry with the foolish children;

deeply pained as she had been by the manner in which they had acted, her heart was not one in which an unforgiving spirit could rest. She was imitating her Master Christ, who loved to do good to even the thankless and hardened; and Mrs. Holmes did not consider Jessie and Charlie amongst *those*; she believed that they had acted ignorantly and hastily, and would have learned a sufficient lesson of the fruits of trusting to themselves.

That letter gave her some hours' thought before she answered it, as she hardly knew in what way to assist them, though her wish to be their friend was as strong as ever. So she ended by sending some money to Miss Cunningham for their help for another week or two, until she had time to make some plans which would be for their good.

It was indeed a joyful day to the three children when the news was brought to them that Mrs. Holmes had written at last, and it was still better to know the reason of her silence, and to find that she had never forgotten them, or lost her interest in them. The money, too, was very welcome, for Charlie was still unemployed, and they were

relieved to know it was part of their own which had been made from the sale of the furniture, as they felt how unworthy they were of her help and kindness, after treating good Mrs. Holmes with such ungratefulness. However, they were all very anxious about the future, for although they were helped for the time being, the children had felt enough of the hardships of real want to make them dread being left to manage for themselves as much as they had once desired it.

"Ah, Jessie," Charlie would say, "if only Mrs. Holmes would have us back to Elton, but I don't suppose she would now, do you? Besides, I should feel rather shy at showing myself there. My! how the boys would laugh at me for turning up again, 'like a bad penny,' as they'd say."

"I don't think that would matter so much," said Jessie, thoughtfully. "I don't say I'd like it myself, but after all, we deserve to be laughed at, and I think that wouldn't be half so bad as to be left in this place any more."

"Miss Cunningham is good to us," put in Lucy, and in that they all agreed, but Jessie was old enough to know that to have one friend ever

so kind, in a large town, where all else were strangers, was very different to being in the place you were born, where every man, woman, and child knows you, and would do you a good turn if they could.

That time, although it was not after all very long, had made a great change in Jessie. I do not mean only because she was taller, thinner, and older-looking, after so much care and sorrow, but because she had learnt some lessons which would never be quite forgotten, and which, as she grew older, she felt had been worth going through all the trouble to have impressed on her mind—the lessons of mistrust of self, and confidence in God.

The little seeds of faith and love sown in her heart by her good grandmother's care, were never quite hidden; all through Jessie had kept clearly before her one idea that God would help and take care of them, but when she left Elton she had not found out her own helplessness, her own weakness, but had expected to be able to avoid all temptations and difficulties which she was warned of. God had taught her by sorrow to be more humble, in those days and nights of anxious dread about

Charlie. Jessie had felt that if we brave temptation, and think ourselves quite secure, we are sure to fall, and much of her brother's wrong-doing she considered her own fault, for bringing him within the sight and hearing of sin. If duty had ordered their life to be spent in Great Felton, without friends to guard and watch them, God could have preserved them unharmed in the midst of the danger of bad example, and bad companionship; but their own wilfulness, their own self-trust had put them there, so the lesson came through the hard way of experience.

Over and over again Jessie had begged God to pardon her fault; over and over again she had cried bitterly as she remembered that Charlie had grieved the Saviour by many a sin which he might have escaped in his own quiet village, but she thanked God, too, that He had come to their help before worse happened, and now she clung to Him more humbly, and therefore more closely than she had known how before.

Things were like this for several weeks; Jessie working hard, Charlie with no employment, all three very anxious as to what they were going to

do ; for they knew that after awhile winter was coming, and times would be harder and things scarcer then.

Poor Charlie ! as he stayed in the close warm room so many hours in the day, it seemed sometimes that his punishment was more than he could bear ; he longed so much to be helping Jessie, and besides that, time hung heavily on his hands always, for though he filled the kettle, lighted the fire, and did other little things which were possible, he found he could get through them in "no-time," as he said.

At first Charlie had been rather disposed to go out for walks, or wander about the town enquiring for work, but he found it hard to keep out of the way of the lads whom he had got to know, and he had promised Miss Cunningham to do that, and if his own resolution was not very strong, he had a great fear of meeting her at some inconvenient time or place—for she went about in the town so much—and somehow Charlie had never got over the shame of being found by her that day he blushed to think of, when he was engaged in fighting. Besides this, it had got out amongst the boys

of the town why he had lost his place, and since he had deserted their society they had taken a violent spite against him, and would follow him up one street and down another, taunting, teasing, and calling him names. So, all things considered, Charlie preferred being cooped up in the room with Lucy and Jessie, to going out in the town, but he would have given a great deal to get away from it all to some place where he had a fair chance, and no one knew any harm of him.

On the whole, he bore the misery of that time pretty well, but there were times when he was cross, and brought tears into Lucy's eyes by his snappish ways, and there were times, too, when he was inclined to despair of doing any good, and would declare that he couldn't try to do right any more. No one cared what became of him, so it didn't matter; and this sounded sadly in Jessie's ears.

But, in spite of these passing moods of giving way, Charlie did try to be a good boy, and perhaps the thing which helped him most just then was his sister's love. If Jessie had reproached him, reminded him of his fall, and complained that

because of it she had to work harder and later, his heart would not have been so tender as it grew under her gentleness, he would not have become so firmly determined to strive that this his first great fall might be the last. Often he would picture to himself a bright dream of the future when he should be old enough to work for his sisters and make them comfortable, and then the prospect faded, as his thoughts came back to the sorrowful present, when he felt himself so useless and burdensome.

All this time Mrs. Holmes had not forgotten them, she was busy arranging some plan for them in the future, but while she knew they were not in real want she let them wait awhile in uncertainty, because she thought it would do them good rather than harm. At last a letter came, and the children were half wild with joy, for they were to go to Elton directly, and money was sent to Miss Cunningham for their journey, and to pay for their lodging to the end of another week. Now that they were really going away, Jessie felt as if she saw the town where she had suffered so much with different eyes ; amidst all the trouble

God had been very good to her there, and when it came to the last Sunday, and the three children went to the Sunday School, and said farewell to their teachers, Jessie and Lucy fairly cried, while Charlie drew his sleeve across his eyes in a way which looked very suspicious.

The last evening Miss Cunningham sent for Charlie to talk to him for a few minutes, and try and impress upon his mind what she wanted to see in him—a steady determination to do right in spite of persuasion or bad example. “I’ll try, indeed I will,” said the boy, as his good friend spoke earnestly to him about the past and the future. “I do mean to do right; I’m sure I never wanted to get into bad ways and tell lies, and steal, and yet somehow I did.”

“It was because you had not found out your own weakness, my boy; you know it now, you see what you are when you are not depending on God for strength, and if you do not keep very near to Him, if you are not faithful in going where you hear of Him, and are taught to love Him, you will fall into temptation as easily as before.”

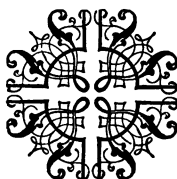
Then, giving him a book as a present, besides

one for each of the girls, Miss Cunningham told Charlie she should often think of him, and pray for him that he might grow up into a good, honest man.

"How can we even thank you, ma'am," said Jessie, when they parted with this lady who had been so kind to them in their loneliness. "We can only ask God to bless and reward you, I am sure, for all your goodness;" and Miss Cunningham stooped down and kissed each young forehead, thanking God in her heart that He had given her the power of befriending them. "She is a dear lady," said little Lucy, as the train whirled them away out of sight of Miss Cunningham, who stood on the platform till the last minute. "I shall always think of those words in the Bible when I remember her— 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto,—' here she paused, "O Jessie, I can't rightly say it, but you know which I mean?" Her sister nodded. "Well, don't you think Miss Cunningham has been as good to us as she would to the dear child Jesus if He was in the world, and she's done it because she loved Him so?"

"I am sure of it, quite sure," said Jessie, but

she was thinking more of Lucy just then. There was an earnest, thoughtful look in her eyes which had often been there of late, and her face had grown strangely delicate and thin since her illness. Jessie's return to her native village was not so joyful as she expected, for a great fear had come for the first time into her heart about her little sister.





CHAPTER VI.

SIX months are over—their short stay in Great Felton seems almost like a dream since they settled down again in the little village, where Charlie was apprenticed to a carpenter, Lucy was put to live with a decent poor family, who were glad to have her help with their five little children, and Jessie was being trained in Mrs. Holmes' house for a good servant. Certainly they were separated, but all of them had found that they must do what seemed best, and never again try to judge for themselves; and then they were close together, so that it was not a real parting; and besides, they had the hope of

getting on and making a home at some future time, perhaps when they were older. All through the winter, Jessie had watched Lucy's face with an anxious heart, for she looked still weak and delicate. The pure country air had not brought back her rosy cheeks, as her friends had thought it would. Still, when she was questioned, she always said she was well—quite well—only a little tired sometimes, and her cough kept her awake at night, but she was happy and comfortable, and Mrs. Myles was as kind to her as if she had been her own mother.

“I've seen many children, but I never saw one like her grow up, ma'am,” said Mrs. Myles herself one day to Mrs. Holmes, who had stopped at the cottage gate, where she was standing with the heavy baby in her arms, to enquire how Lucy went on. “She don't seem to ail anything particular, except that little cough, and a weary, tired look, still anyone may see she's dwindling away. I couldn't pet it more if she was my own.” And here Mrs. Myles wiped her eyes with a corner of her apron, and gave the baby a little toss to hide her emotion, “for she's a good gentle child, and

my young ones are as fond of her as can be ; still she'll be taken before long, unless I'm mistaken."

Mrs. Holmes walked home very gravely after that ; she thought of Jessie, and what a terrible grief was in store for her, and that made her sad, but when she thought of Lucy, she *could* not sorrow, for she knew how happy and blessed are the little ones whom God takes early to their heavenly home.

So spring came in—mild, damp, April days—the trees were coming into leaf so quickly, you could almost see the buds burst and open ; the little violets bloomed on sunny banks, and the bright daffodils looked gay and cheery. The Elton children roamed about the lanes and went flower hunting as usual, but Lucy was not with them ; the little cough, the paleness, the weariness, had brought forth the result good Mrs. Myles feared, and the child was dying fast.

Jessie's grief at first was almost too much for her to bear, she blamed herself for ever taking Lucy from Elton, believing she was the cause of that first illness, from which the child had never quite recovered, she was *almost* ready to blame God

in her first wild sorrow—not quite though, for the memory of His goodness and love stopped her, and she prayed earnestly for strength to say, “Thy will—not mine—be done.”

Charlie was pale with grief—he could not bear to be away from Lucy, and when his work was done he got leave to go and sit by her side for an hour, and anyone who had known him in his wildest spirits would hardly have recognized him in the quiet boy who shook up pillows, or handed water, or raised his little sister so gently.

As for Lucy herself, her heart seemed full of grace—God’s peace. She knew she must die, but no fear seemed to disturb her. “Jesus would take her,” she said, and she was not afraid.

To her, the Saviour had always seemed a good, kind friend, who was never far off, who was grieved when she was naughty, and pleased when she was good ; who died on the Cross to wash away her sins, and who would take her to be happy always in His beautiful heaven.

“Don’t look so sorry, Charlie, don’t,” she said to her brother one evening, when they were quite alone. “I’m little and weak, and perhaps if I

lived to grow up I might do naughty things and displease God, and now I can't do any wrong when He takes me to heaven, so it *must* be best to go."

"Oh I know, I know," said Charlie, "but we'll miss you so, Lucy—me and Jessie, and its hard."

"Oh you'll come to me some day, its only Jesus wants me to go first," said Lucy, quietly, with a smile of content on her face.

"I don't know, I'm afraid," and here Charlie's head went down in the bed clothes. "You see, Lucy, I try to do right, I go to chapel and Sunday School and all that, because it pleases everyone and I promised; but I don't, I really *don't*, love God! Are you very shocked, Lucy?" and Charlie's head came up again, that he might see the effect of his confession.

"No, I'm not shocked, Charlie. I'm sorry of course, and it puzzles me. I can't see how you can *help* loving Jesus. Oh, dear Charlie, you love me and Jessie, and Mrs. Holmes, and all the people who've been kind to you, and yet God has done more than anyone. He gave Jesus to suffer so terribly, and to die that sad death, all because He

loved you, and yet you say you don't love Him back again !”

“ I wish I did. While you talk like that, I feel as if I did just a little, Lucy; but when it comes to saying my prayers and all that, it seems a bother, and I feel I don't love God. What shall I do? My heart's so hard, it's as if I couldn't help it.”

While he spoke the puzzled look had all gone from the little sister's face, and she put her small hand in Charlie's, saying, “Tell Jesus you want to love Him, and you don't know how. Tell Him so every day and night, and He'll teach you.”

“ Certain ? ” asked Charlie.

“ Yes, quite certain,” replied Lucy. “ He'll do anything you ask Him if it's right, and He'll never send any one away.”

“ Then I'll ask Him every morning and every evening, Lucy, for your sake ; and perhaps He'll make me good, so that I may get to heaven, too.”

“ Ah, Charlie dear, don't think I'm going to heaven because I'm *good*,” said Lucy. “ It's because Jesus is good, and I'm very sinful, and He makes my soul white in His blood, so that the

stains are all gone, and I can go to heaven with Him, and all the other happy children who are singing there. Oh, dear! how glad I'll be when I hear them; it makes me think of the hymn we sang so often at Sunday School, 'Around the throne of God in heaven.' You must think of me when you sing that with the rest; for I hope I'll be one of that 'holy, happy band,' Charlie."

Charlie sobbed aloud then, for he felt that little Lucy would not talk to him many more evenings; but Mrs. Myles came in then to remind him his time was up, and so he could only kiss her softly, and run home, pulling his cap over his eyes to hide their redness. Before he slept that night, Charlie said the prayer which Lucy had asked him to make, and with a little glimmer of her strong trust that it would be heard and answered, he fell asleep.

It was not many nights after that one, that Jessie received a message to come quickly, for Lucy seemed worse, and she hurried to the cottage, only just in time for a few last words. "You're happy dear!" she whispered, bending over the child, with smothered sobs. "Oh yes, so happy, *so glad*," said the little faint voice; "you'll be

happy too some day, dear Jessie, because you'll like to know I'm safe."

"Oh, dear Lucy, I try, I try to be willing," faltered Jessie, "but I love you so."

Lucy drew her sister's head down very near, and the words came with difficulty. "They read to me to day about Martha and Mary," she gasped, "Jesus was so sorry for them, and yet He let their brother die. He loved them dearly, too. Oh don't grieve, Jessie; Jesus is near, so very near, and I'm glad."

She said no more; after that she lay still without opening her eyes. Charlie came in and knelt down by the bedside, Mrs. Holmes, poor Mrs. Myles, and one or two of the tiny children crept in silently, but she never heeded them, only lay there looking calm and happy, until for one second there was a start, a murmur, the eyes unclosed—and closed for the last time. Jesus had taken Lucy home.

In the little hilly churchyard of that country village, a small grass-covered grave may still be seen, bearing her name and age, and the words, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Many a

time the village children have stopped their noisy play and gone there to think of Lucy, and speak of her in hushed voices ; many a quiet evening Jessie has sat by its side, lifting up her heart to God in prayer, that she too-may go home to Him, when the time comes, as peacefully, as gladly as Lucy did ; but still more often Charlie has stolen there in early morning, when none but himself was stirring, when no eye but God's could see, and then there has come back to him the memory of the night, when his little dead sister told him to pray for that love to Jesus, which he hopes and believes is really in his heart now.

For Charlie knows that nothing is quite the same as it was ; he is as merry as if no trouble had passed over his head, so you might say at the sight of his happy face, but it is a happiness that is better and safer than any other, because it comes from a certainty that God is his friend, that Jesus, who casts out none who come to Him, has pardoned his many sins ; and so Lucy's words have come true, and the love he wished to feel has sprung up in his heart at last. Years went by, joys and troubles marked them, changes and difficulties

came, as they do to all of us, but God rewarded Jessie and Charlie for their efforts to live useful Christian lives, by giving them their early wish of a home together in their native village, and the hope of a more enduring home when life is over, where there shall never be sorrow or parting.





AMY'S TROUBLES.

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“Is anything the matter, my dear?” asked Mrs. Arnold, after looking up from her sewing two or three times at her daughter, Amy, who was sitting in a melancholy attitude by the window, looking out with an expression of listless dissatisfaction on her face into the garden, where the evening sun shone pleasantly on the little lawn, the bright flower-beds, and the golden blossoms of the laburnum.

“No, mamma; at least”—Amy hesitated—“you would laugh at me, call it silly, and not worth fretting about.”

“Very likely, my dear, I should think the

matter a very small one; I have learned to think that of many things which seemed important once. But I should not necessarily think *you* silly for being vexed; I do not expect your feelings, at twelve, to be the same as mine, at forty."

"Well, mamma, there are several things that vex me. But one thing is, that I fancy Annie Weston has behaved very strangely lately, is not like she used to be."

"In what have you noticed a change, my dear?"

"Oh, in a number of things. Last week I was looking at a book of poetry she has, and I said that I should like to read it, but she never offered to lend it to me; and you know, mamma, I always take care of books, and I have always had hers and she mine. And then, while we were reading in class yesterday, we came to something about—well, mamma, it was about people who think too much of themselves—and I fancied, I am not quite sure, but I fancied Annie gave a sort of a look and smile, as if she thought it was like me. And then last Saturday—it does not seem much as it is told——"

"I quite agree with you in that," remarked her mother.

"But I just want to tell you, mamma. Last Saturday I met her walking with another young lady, I do not know who, and Annie only said, 'Good morning, dear,' and walked on, did not stop to speak to me for one minute; it seemed so cold. And then, then—well, I can't remember anything else in particular."

"It does not appear to me," said her mother, "that 'Good morning, dear,' was a very unfriendly salutation. I cannot see that Annie was under any obligation to interrupt a conversation with another friend to talk to you; and the other grievances seem equally fanciful."

"But it is not only about Annie, mamma. Miss Clifford is going from home for three weeks, perhaps a month, and I shall not see her all that long, long time."

"I should not have thought you would have missed Miss Clifford's society much, Amy, you enjoy so little of it. Is she not in the schoolroom with the elder young ladies?"

"Yes, mamma; but I can just see her every

day two or three times, and I have always the hope of speaking to her, and I know she is in the house, and I can listen for her voice and her step. Oh, dear ! it will seem *so long* ! ” and Amy sighed.

“ My dear Amy, I am not going to laugh at your trouble,” said Mrs. Arnold ; “ I feel quite serious. Not, however, because I think the subjects of trouble important, but because you are indulging habits of mind which, if not checked, will cause you continual uneasiness all your life long.”

“ What habits, mamma ? ”

“ In the first place, my dear, I have often been sorry to notice that you are very readily offended and vexed. You colour and look distressed at a playful remark of your brother's, at which Janet would only laugh ; and I really think you ponder over it for hours or days together ; and it is the same in your intercourse with your schoolfellows. You seem disposed to make the most of every little slight or grievance, and to fancy such where they never exist.”

“ I think I am rather sensitive,” said Amy.

“ Nay, my dear Amy, do not call an ugly thing by a pretty name. I know persons of this

unfortunate disposition call it sensitiveness, and, I think, often rather value themselves upon it, as proof of superior delicacy of feeling and warm affections. But I am persuaded, generally, love of *self* has much more to do with it than love of others.

“ An exaggerated idea of our own importance, and the place we occupy in the thoughts of others, is a fruitful source of offence-taking. Things which are said or done without the slightest reference to us will be imagined as intended for our special annoyance. Shall I tell you a fable? A hedge-sparrow had built her nest in a tree, overlooking a garden, and was there busily engaged bringing up a young family. The garden having been robbed by some bad boys, the owner sent for masons to raise the wall. As the men were at work up hopped the sparrow. ‘ I must say,’ she chirped, ‘ my feelings are much wounded. Myself and family are perfectly well bred, never pry into our neighbours’ affairs ; it was quite needless to build this wall, to shield the premises from our observation ;’ and with a grieved countenance she hopped away.”

Amy laughed.

“And when, my dear,” continued her mother, “there has been really something said or done which shows that we are not held in the very highest estimation by others, might it not be worth while, before being offended, to consider whether, after all, we may not be held in as high estimation as we *deserve*? If we cultivate an humble spirit, lowly thoughts of ourselves, we shall not be greatly astonished or indignant on the slightest indication that others do not think us perfectly wise, good, or beautiful.”

“But, mamma, how can any one help knowing it, if they are cleverer or better than some of their schoolfellows? For instance, I cannot think Miss Harvey is as clever in music as I am, because I *know* she is not. She has learned twice as long, and cannot play half as well.”

“Then you are not asked to think that. Humility does not require us to deny our own superiority where it exists, but it requires us to be equally ready, even more ready, to see the superiority of others where they have the advantage; it requires, too, that we do not exaggerate *the* value of those things in which we happen to

excel, or depreciate those in which they are the superior. I remember your remarking once, in a tone indicating contempt for the art, that Miss Harvey could *sew* much better than you; yet, some day, you may find it quite as desirable to be a good needlewoman as to play well on the piano. And as to whether we are better or worse than others morally, we are so little fit to be judges, that we shall do wisely to abstain from judging; indeed, my dear, when we have once really seen into our own hearts, I think we shall be rather disposed to feel as if the chief of sinners, than to thank God we are better than other men are."

Mother and daughter sat some minutes in silence, then Mrs. Arnold resumed, "The other thing of which I wish to speak, Amy, is your habit of forming extravagant, passionate attachments."

"Oh, mamma, what harm can there be in that?" asked Amy, in a distressed tone.

"If you were honestly to try, I think you would find out for yourself some evils arising from it, though probably I could point out many more."

"But, mamma," said Amy, "you said yourself

your feelings and mine must be different. What would be foolish for you may be natural for me."

"There is some truth in that, Amy. The affections are more impulsive and exuberant in youth than in later life ; attachments are formed more readily, are more ardent, and manifested with greater freedom and warmth. All this is natural—just what our Maker intended, and is therefore right and beautiful ; but it does not follow that this youthful ardour cannot be carried to excess, cannot need restraint and guidance. Besides, Amy, any beauty there may be in these romantic attachments is greatly injured by the object being changed too frequently."

Amy blushed, for she could remember at least five favourites who had risen and set during the past three or four years.

"It seems to me," her mother went on, "that for the last few weeks your admiration for Miss Clifford has been the one absorbing interest of your life. You reckon a day to have been pleasant or otherwise according as you have seen and spoken to her or not ; I find her initials written on your slate, and grown in mustard and

cross in your garden ; I used to wonder why you always chose the Park Road when taking a walk, until I discovered it was for the pleasure of passing her house. I doubt whether a waking hour passes in which you do not think of her, Amy."

"I am *sure* one does not," said Amy ; "but what harm is there in it ?"

"In the first place, my dear, it must seriously interfere with your studies. If, as you say, you are listening to her step and her voice while at school, and calculating the chances of meeting her, it is plain your attention cannot, at the same time, be fully engaged on what you are learning ; and considering that your present age is the very best for acquiring knowledge, this is not a small evil. But the mere waste of time is of far less consequence than the waste of energy and power that results from the absorption of the mind in one passionate feeling. Then, if I am not much mistaken, you give yourself up continually to idle day-dreaming ; imagining all kinds of scenes, yourself and your favourite friend being, of course, the chief actors—unexpected meetings, affecting partings, exciting adventures in which you show

self-sacrificing devotion to your friend. I fear in these violent attachments there is something of idolatry—loving and serving the creature more than the Creator. Our heavenly Father, our merciful Redeemer, claims the first place in our heart ; and any one yielding to this claim cannot find life without interest and object. And you need not feel, my dear child, as if love to God forbids or destroys human friendship. Depend upon it, the friendship which is regulated, moderated, yet intensified by that highest affection, is a more beautiful and happy thing than any wild, passionate feeling not thus sanctified ; perhaps, born only of selfishness and love of excitement.”



